

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPR, CG

SUBJECT: SHABA INCURSIONS: U.S. PRESS REACTION

1. DAVID BRODER, WRITING IN WASHPOST MAY 17, SAYS "THERE IS A SENSE HERE (IN WASHINGTON) THAT AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IS SHIFTING IN A MORE ANTI-SOVIET DIRECTION AND THAT SOME OF THE RHETORIC AND THE ASSUMPTIONS OF THE COLD WAR ARE BEING REVIVED. THE PRECIPITATING CAUSE OF THE CHANGE IS THE GROWING EVIDENCE OF RUSSIAN-CUBAN INTERVENTION IN AFRICA."

2. EXCERPTS FOLLOW.

3. IF THE SCENARIO OF THE COMING MONTHS DOES IN FACT PRODUCE THIS REVIVAL OF COLD WAR THINKING, WHAT ARE THE PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES FOR AMERICAN DOMESTIC POLITICS?

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 STATE 125208

4. THREE PROBABILITIES OCCUR TO ME

-- THE CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL TREND, WHICH SO FAR HAS BEEN FED MAINLY BY PUBLIC RESISTANCE TO DOMESTIC WELFARE SPENDING AND THE FEARS OF INFLATION WOULD PROBABLY BE ACCELERATED BY A GOOD STIFF DOSE OF ANTI-COMMUNIST RHETORIC. AS HAS BEEN SEEN ALREADY, THIS KIND OF QUESTION TENDS TO UNITE

THE REPUBLICANS AND DIVIDE THE DEMOCRATS.

-- A DEMAND FOR HIGHER DEFENSE SPENDING TO COUNTER THE PERCEIVED SOVIET THREAT WOULD COMPLICATE THE ALREADY TRICKY CAMPAIGN TO CURB INFLATION WITHOUT RESORT TO DIRECT WAGE AND PRICE CONTROLS. ADDED BILLIONS OF DEFENSE SPENDING WOULD WIDEN THE FEDERAL DEFICIT AND REDUCE THE PROSPECTS FOR SIGNIFICANT TAX CUTS.

-- BOTH THE FOREGOING FACTORS WOULD CONFRONT PRESIDENT CARTER WITH THE HARDEST KIND OF POLITICAL CHOICE: WHETHER TO RESIST THE PUBLIC PRESSURE FOR A STIFFER ANTI-SOVIET STANCE AND ALL THAT IMPLIES, OR GET OUT IN FRONT OF THE MOVEMENT AND TRY TO LEAD IT.

5. I HAVE NEVER DOUBTED THE SINCERITY OF CARTER'S PASSION TO CURB THE GROWTH IN NUCLEAR WEAPONRY AND THE EVER HIGHER COST OF MILITARY SPENDING. GIVING UP THE HOPE OF A NEW SALT AGREEMENT WOULD BE EVEN;HARDER FOR HIM THAN WAS ABANDONING COMPREHENSIVE TAX REFORM.

6. BUT, UNLESS THE SIGNS ARE MISLEADING, CARTER AT THIS POINT LACKS THE PERSONAL AND POLITICAL STRENGTH TO RESIST SUCCESSFULLY THE FORCES THAT ARE GATHERING HERE AND IN THE OTHER NATO COUNTRIES. TO STIFFEN THE RESISTANCE TO WHAT IS PERCEIVED AS SOVIET AGGRANDIZEMENT.

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PAGE 03 STATE 125208

7. WHAT HE CANNOT RESIST, HE MAY BE FORCED TO TRY TO LEAD. AND THAT WOULD PROVIDE A TEST FOR THE PRESIDENT UNLIKE ANY HE HAS FACED SO FAR. VANCE

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